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SUBJECT: HONG KONG INSIDER SAYS EXCO CONVENOR LEUNG WILL
RUN FOR CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Classified By: Consul General Joe Donovan for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Of the three "non-candidates" to succeed Donald Tsang as Hong Kong Chief Executive (CE) in 2012 -- Chief Secretary Henry Tang, Financial Secretary John Tsang, and Executive Council (ExCo) Convenor C.Y. Leung -- Leung has been the most visibly "non-campaigning". While few doubt Leung has his eyes on the prize, Leung himself has been circumspect in the press about his intentions. In a conversation with us July 8, however, former Legislative Councilor and ExCo member Allen Lee (strictly protect throughout) told us C.Y. Leung told him in a meeting March 26 that he will run.

¶2. Allen Lee told us that, prior to March, he had not met with Leung for 29 years. Leung paid him a "courtesy call" March 13, followed by the meeting on March 26 at which Leung revealed his plans to run for CE. Leung used a third meeting to demonstrate to Lee (an elder statesman with high-level connections in Beijing) that Leung was aware of both current problems facing Hong Kong and his own challenges in polishing his image. Lee joked that Leung's goal was that Lee, now a television commentator, would go easy on Leung on his TV program.

¶3. (C) Explaining his recent highly visible public outreach campaign, Leung told reporters, "People who are involved in public service should stay connected with different sectors of society." Sectors with whom Leung has sought to connect in recent months include:

- The Democratic Party, whose 15th anniversary Leung attended in March;
- The Hong Kong Journalists' Association, who hosted Leung as guest of honor at their annual dinner in May;
- Police officers contesting revisions to their pay scale, to whose grievances Leung lent ear in late June; and
- A television cooking show, on which Leung appeared July 4.

Allen Lee approves of these efforts by Leung, whom he thinks has the edge over Henry Tang and John Tsang. Lee discounts the Financial Secretary's prospects, since he does not think Tsang has support in Beijing. Tang has a better chance, but Lee thinks Leung can edge him out.

¶4. (C) Bio note: Aged 54, Leung Chun-ying is a chartered surveyor serving as chairman of DTZ Asia-Pacific, which press reports as the largest international property consultant in China (although Allen Lee reports he has resigned to focus on his "campaign"). He is the Convenor of the "non-official members" of the Executive Council (i.e. those members of ExCo who are not Hong Kong government cabinet secretaries). He is the only ExCo member to have served continuously since the handover.
DONOVAN